

Story #249 (Tape #7, Summer 1970) Narrator: Mehmet Beder, about 70

Location: Yukarı Kise Köy, Güvem nahiye,
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The Three Pieces of Advice Purchased

(I served ten years in the army, but I do not remember what the year dates were. I was in all the wars [which means Balkan War, World War I, and War of Independence])

Hacı Gönem: He was a hero when Istanbul was occupied by the infidels.)

Once on a time there was great poverty in the world. There were three men who were tired of being poor. They decided to go and work in Istanbul and be rich like everyone else. As there were no means of transportation in those days, the three friends walked to Istanbul in three or five days. At Istanbul they went to the courtyard of the Yeni Cami.*

Each searched for a job there and found something suitable. As the money of those days was very light in weight but heavy in value, they got 7 1/2 kuruş a day. They agreed to meet once a week at the courtyard of the Yeni Cami as the most convenient meeting place, for still they knew of no other place in the city. One said, "We can also have our letters written there as well."

One arrived earlier than the others for one of their meetings. He saw there a big fellow, like me. The big fellow sat down and started to think, alone. The first of the three friends asked him, "What are you thinking about, old man?"

*Yeni Cami (New Mosque) is at the Istanbul end of Galata Bridge, a meeting place of all soldiers--all the thieves and pickpockets there--a crowded square. There are many letter writers there, even today.

He said, "Can this hand be filled?"

"Of course."

"Well, let us see."

The man took out 50 kuruş from his pocket and gave him the 50 kuruş.

When he got the 50 kuruş, he said, "Do not deviate from the straight road." *Advice*

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that is all," said the big fellow.

The man was sorry he had given 50 kuruş for that advice. He just said, "Do not deviate from the straight road."

Then his friends arrived, but he was ashamed to tell them what he had done. He soon left his friends and went and saw the big fellow to whom he had paid the 50 kuruş in return for the advice that he had given him, "Do not deviate from the straight [right] road." He said to himself, "I might as well have given 50 kuruş more and gotten more advice from him." He gave the man another 50 kuruş saying, "I suppose I have to go the whole way and pay all the expenses and see what else you have to say."

"Do not say anything about what does not concern you," said the big fellow. *Advice*

A week later, he went and found the big fellow in the same place and he still kept saying, "Can my hand be filled?"

He gave him another 50 kuruş, making the total 150 in the currency of that day. This time, the man said, "Do not do anything in anger." *Advice*

Well, the three friends spent three or five years in Istanbul and they left that city. But before leaving Istanbul, the man went to see the big fellow again, but he said, "Your business is complete [i.e., I have no more advice for you]."

They took with them, as they left, such things as thread and needles, henna, and such small things as gifts to their people. In those days, one could not well take anything else for presents, for there were no roads to travel. They arrived at Izmit and sat down somewhere and began talking.

One asked, "Oh, friends, how long have we been away from home?"

"Six or seven years."

"Well, how much did you earn during that time in Istanbul? Let us all show the money we have earned."

They took out their money. One took out one lira, one 150 kurus, and the man who had paid the big fellow took out 50 kurus.

One asked the other, "What new words*did you add to your learning during the six or seven years?"

One said, "I did not learn any new words. What about you?"

"I did not learn any, either," another said

None of the three had learned any new words.

One of them, who was an intelligent man like me, said, "Evet, efendim." ["Yes, sir" = a city expression] "What did you learn?"

"Bendeniz, efendim." ["Your humble servant"--deniz here a diminutive]

The other man, Yakup (Aga),** for example, said, "Biz" ["we"--that is, he had learned to use the editorial "we"].

They learned there that they had really added nothing new to their vocabulary, and so the smartest one taught them these. Then he slapped the others on their backs and they all got up.

*Word = something learned. Piece of learning = part of one's vocabulary. Figurative for "What new things did you learn?"

*Kara Yakup and Hacı Gönen, his two friends, were present. The taping session was at Hacı's home.

But right then they were surrounded by a number of gendarmes, because it happened that the padişah's treasury had been robbed. The gendarmes said, "You robbed the padişah's treasury and then went and divided it nicely among yourselves?"

Now I, for example, say, "Evet, efendim."

Hacı Gönen says, "Bendeniz, efendim."

Yakup Ağa says, "Biziz, efendim."

"You cuckolds and sons of cuckolds!" said the gendarmes, and took them to the palace of the padişah. "We have found those who robbed the treasury," they said.

They tried to defend themselves, stammering, "We were new here," because they did not know how to talk properly.

"These fellows are very ignorant. They know nothing about anything. They are not competent of robbing the treasury." Thereupon, they were released.

Accounted

Along the way, they came to Cağrı [köy] and stayed there as guests. After talking a while with them, their hosts asked, "When did you go to Istanbul?" Other questions they asked them, too. "You are leaving tomorrow, but there are bandits at a pass on the way. They may rob you."

One said, "Let us not take that road."

[Kara Yakup: "I just remembered another tale."]

"Let us take the other one," said the second.

The one who had paid the big man in Istanbul for advice said, "You may take that other road, but I will not leave the straight road." (You remember that he had been given this advice in Istanbul.)

The bandits were packing their white tents when the one on the straight road met them. The bandits said, "Hey, where are you going before applying here? Come here! Where do you come from?"

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"Istanbul."

"Come and sit here." The bandit chief said, "You are my guest for three days. This is the custom here. Stay here for three days and then go. We shall eat together. We shall talk together. We shall sleep together. We shall get up together."

What could he do? He said, "All right," and stayed there three days. He told them about his past. On the third day, he asked permission to leave.

"Permission is yours," they said.

There was a girl tied to the pole of the bandits' tent, strapped there. While the Istanbul man and the chief bandit were eating, the former never asked any question about that girl.

The chief bandit asked, "You stayed here three days and asked no questions about this girl."

"I never say anything about things that do not concern me," he answered.

The chief bandit said to his friends, "Go and bring that gray horse. Bring me a gun, too, and fill the saddlebags with gold."

[Kara Yakup: "Eat, Mehmet, eat" = "Spend, Mehmet, spend."]

They said, "Go, and good luck to you."

When he reached his village, he came to the garden before his house. He looked through the window of his house and saw that his wife was rolling with a young man about the room. Sometimes the young man was on top, and sometimes she. They were playing.

He drew his gun, but right then he remembered the advice "Do not do anything in anger," and he put the gun back. He decided to go to the oda of the village. He went and asked, who is the muhtar here?"

"He is such and such a man."

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"Come along, muhtar." He took the muhtar to his house and said, "See what my wife is doing with that young man?"

The muhtar said, "God damn! How long have you been away?"

"Seven years."

"How old was your son when you left?"

"Seven or eight

"Well, that young man is your son," the muhtar said.

"A-a-a-a-h--all right," the man said. He then entered his house and after talking a while said, "Now, son, you can go. I have two friends in such and such a village. Go and find out if they are safely back."

The son went and found that these friends had not yet returned. The third day later, they came, but they had been robbed on the way by night and they had waited till dark to come home and enter their houses because they were ashamed.

The first man said, "This is what happens to a man who leaves the straight road."